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'69 memo told U.S.

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Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Nixon was warned in a secret 1969 memo that a major withdrawal of U.S. troops would leave the Saigon government vulnerable to political collapse in the countryside in the event of an enemy offensive like the one now being conducted.

The State Department, Central Intelligence Agency and Joint Chiefs of Staff joined in sounding alarms about a too-large or too-sudden pullout of U.S. troops.

The civilian leadership of the Defense Department, on the other hand, called for "de-Americanization of the war" and Saigon's "takeover of its responsibilities."

Mr. Nixon obviously sided with the Pentagon civilians and launched his Vietnamization and withdrawal program. Including the 20,000-man cut he announced Wednesday night, the U.S. troop level will be down to 49,000 by July 1, 500,000 less than when he took office three years ago.

The debate over the relationship between the U.S. military presence and Saigon's political control is contained in National Security

Study Memorandum 1 (NSSM 1), a secret document on the war prepared by national security adviser Henry A. Kissinger in February, 1969.

'Await reciprocal cuts'

Copies of the study have been obtained by The Sun-Times, New York Times, Washington Post and Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist.

Kissinger asked the various agencies to comment on how the U.S. military effort related to prospects for "either 'victory' or a strong non-Communist political role."

The State Department replied: "Any reduction in the level of our own military effort without a corresponding reduction in presence and activity of North Vietnamese forces may reduce the likelihood that the GVN (the government of South Vietnam) would work toward political mobilization. . . .

"On balance, we conclude that a policy of maintaining the current level of military effort while preparing for possible reciprocal reduction of that level affords the best pros-

pullout risks

pects for increased political mobilization."

The CIA replied: "South Vietnam has shown (political) progress whether measured against 1961 or 1964, but it has been slow, fragile and evolutionary. It is difficult to see how the U.S. can largely disengage over the next few years without jeopardizing this."

The joint chiefs replied: "It is inconceivable that the essential (political) conditions could be realized as a result of an early unilateral reduction of U.S. military effort."

Avoiding perpetual dependence

The civilian office of the secretary of defense replied: "If the GVN does not improve as an effective non-Communist political system, even its military effort is bound to suffer as it has in the past.

"Americanization of the war in Vietnam was made necessary because of near-collapse of the GVN in February, 1965. The U.S. military effort has provided the shield behind which the reconstruction of the GVN has taken place.

"De-Americanization of the war has to go hand-in-hand with the GVN takeover of its responsibilities if it is to survive in its own right and not be perpetually dependent on the United States military presence."

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Todd Simon

Mass Bombings Didn't Work

Military minds are usually just about one war behind. They suffer from scientific lag.

Bombing North Vietnam may be highly or completely ineffectual.

Those who ordered bombings of Hanoi and Haiphong may have been repeating a mistake made in July-August, 1943, when the RAF Bomber Command mass-bombed Hamburg, Germany.



SIMON

Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, has set up a fuss in Washington by waving a Vietnam war document around the Capitol. It is a "National Security Memorandum" prepared for President Nixon in 1969.

PUBLISHED REPORTS of this document say U. S. bombing of North Vietnam has not achieved its intended objectives.

The State Department judged that the bombing had strained North Vietnam but had not "paralyzed" Hanoi.

The Defense Department concluded that despite its adverse effects on the North Vietnamese, the bombing seemed only to have rallied the people behind the Hanoi war effort.

The Central Intelligence Agency decided that "the air war did not seriously affect the flow of men and supplies to Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam; did not erode significantly North Vietnam's military defense capability or Hanoi's determination to persist in the war."

Yet this report in 1969 came about a quarter of a century after 1945 studies in the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which made a detailed investigation of the effect of the monster three-night air bombardment of Hamburg — which indicated a shocking failure.

The mass bombing wiped out one-third of that big industrial and shipping center. It probably killed as many residents as were destroyed in Hiroshima.

As John Kenneth Galbraith tells it, and he was a director of the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, the net result was to drive living standards in Hamburg down near a bare minimum — but to shift more manpower into war production.

That resulted in "a distinct possibility that the attacks on Hamburg increased Germany's output of war material and thus her military effectiveness," Galbraith wrote.

Yet more than 20 years later mass bombing raids on major North Vietnam cities were made. This month again they were repeated despite the 1945 report on Hamburg and the 1969 memorandum drawn up for President Nixon, saying such mass aerial strikes may well be a military futility.

Answering this, a State Department spokesman, Charles W. Bray, this week said there is no comparison between the pre-1969 bombing tactics and today's air war. Bray said the enemy now presents more accessible conventional military targets.

BUT THAT WAS SURELY true of the Hamburg arms factories and docks and submarine pens, back in 1943. Yet that terrible destruction, except for some possible psychological effects and of course the awful loss of life, was not a successful act of war. No more than the German mass bombing of Coventry had been before.

All the bombing of North Vietnam has not brought about what has been claimed to be the U.S. war aim: To prove to Hanoi that its aggression (direct or indirect via the Viet Cong) does not pay.

One's trust in military thinkers and their most advanced war instruments has to remain lugubriously low, as long as that remains true.